

A literature Review on Domestic Violence in South Africa

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A short literature Review on Domestic Violence in South Africa (mainly from 1976 to 2015)

Domestic Violence in South Africa: A Literature review.

A literature Review on Domestic Violence in South Africa

Twenty years after the commencement of the domestic violence act 116 of 1998 which seek to provide protection amongst individuals in a society, domestic violence prevails. This paper seek to review the literature that has already been surfaced in describing, assessing and understanding domestic violence in South Africa.

A study done by Zondo (2007) titled ‘Youth Violence and the Changing African Family in an Urban Township: The case of Umlazi’ revealed that a “large proportion of the female students expressed being worried about being sexually attacked, as verbal abuse and intimidation are daily occurrences for girls” (Zondo 2007:53). Moreover, many girls described the possible threat of sexual assault and physical violence as an unescapable feature in their daily lives. This study indicate that for most women, they feel that their fear is inevitable, yet there is Domestic Violence act in place. Zondo (2007) further noted that in most cases, when researching about domestic violence, nuclear families are prioritised over other family types.

In her study, Naidu (2011), assessed the condition of Indian women in marriage. In this study of domestic violence in nonnuclear (especially low income families) and extended families, Naidu (2011) explained the institutionalisation of emotional pressure towards daughter-in-law by a mother-in-law though what Naidu (2011) ‘ideal wife’ and the expectations that come with it. Responding to Singh and Harisunker (2010) study, which insinuated that marriage is a kind of anchorage within Indian society, Naidu (2011) argued “it would be myopic not to see that there are a significant number of Indian marriages that are experienced not so much as anchoring, as much as entrapping” (p. 85).

To this end, Hoven (2001) compiled a statistical report which depicted that almost half (47%) of sexual offences and assaults took place inside a private dwellings. This is due to the extreme under reporting of abuse within relationships (Hoven: 2001). The study also subscribed to the estimation that 25 percent of South African women are assaulted by their boyfriends or husbands every week. In her analysis, Seedat (2006) firstly quoted Berger & Luckmann (1991) (on the notion that we are not born the members of the society) to describe that it is a created expectation that women become an object to men. Seedat concluded that socioeconomic factors play a major role in sustaining the control men seem to have over women. In that way, Subedar (2003) argued that “these acts are embedded in power inequalities and ideologies of male supremacy and are embedded in society and in the institutions such as schools in the way they are organised” (p.13).

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Jali (2014) conducted a qualitative study at Umbumbulu district of KwaZulu Natal, titled ‘Men’s reason for abusing their spouses in the Umbumbulu district of KwZulu Natal’. In this study, Jali (2014) found out that “It is clear from the literature that men who batter come from all socio-economic backgrounds, races and religions” (p.20).

In his study on domestic violence in an Indian community, Sarkar (2010) established that domestic violence against women is remarkably predominant in India and the women usually (try to) hide it. Sarkar (2010) also suggested that wife beating or physical ill-treatment is very common in many Indian households. During this study, Sarkar (2010) also noticed that it is very difficult to conduct a study on women, since most females are averse to divulge information they consider confidential, personal and intimate. In that way, the study conducted by Hall and Lewing (2003) found that the culture of silence on domestic violence makes it difficult for many service providers including police service to identify domestic violence. Hall and Lewing (2003) estimated that a woman will suffer an average of thirty-five (35) beatings or other abusive acts before contacting a single service provider.

In 2002-2003, Sclozman conducted a study on ‘Television Violence and Domestic Violence’ that evaluated one thousand (1000) Television programs over two years and found out that sixty one percent (61%) of those programs contained interpersonal violence, and most violence was shown in children’s show. Joseph (2002) alluded that “the emotional trauma related to witnessing violent episodes may be manifested as behavioural problems as well as cognitive difficulties” (p.11).

Grovert’s (2008) literature on domestic violence titled ‘Domestic violence against women: A literature review’ argued that “building an abusive relationship takes time - if the abuse started occurring on the first date, far fewer women would stay in the relationships as long as they do” (p.7). This literature quotes Weiss (2000) and Walker (1979) on that it is so common that after abuse, the perpetrator would apologize copiously and swear that they will never do it again. This leads to honeymoon stage (Matthews: 2004; Weiss: 2000 and Walker: 1979). In this stage, the victim of violence believes it when the perpetrator says the abuse will not happen again (Grovert: 2008). Not all relationships, according to Grovert (2008), experience tension building stage. Weiss (2002) described a woman whose husband would just beat her ‘out of the blue’. Why would a women stay in an abusive relationship? In answering that, Dlamini (2005) in her submission for masters in theology, titled: ‘Zulu women, domestic violence and christian faith: does the church help or hinder victims’, she (Dlamini : 2005)

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depicted the reasons for Zumu women not to leave the abusive husband. These are economic reasons, young children and the fear to divorce (Dlamini:2005)

Nonceba (2016) submitted on that there is significantly higher incidents of physical and sexual violence amongst African women. Accounting for the in underreporting of domestic violence incidents in South Africa, Nonceba (2016) divulged that most of South African women still regard police as oppressing agencies like in apartheid. It is on these basis that statics cannot always be reliable in the quantification of the effect of domestic violence in South Africa.

Shaikh (2003), in her submission for a masters degree in Social work thesis titled ‘Women’s experiences and expectation of Domestic Violence act” understood the Domestic Violence Act 116 of 1998 as failing to criminalize domestic violence and further argued that “it only criminalize the breach of the Protection Order” (p.6). This limitation makes the Act to be “a theoretical exercise than a practical one” (p.6).

This paper reviewed the literature that has already been surfaced in describing, assessing and understanding domestic violence in South Africa by utilizing the literature between 1975 to date.

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